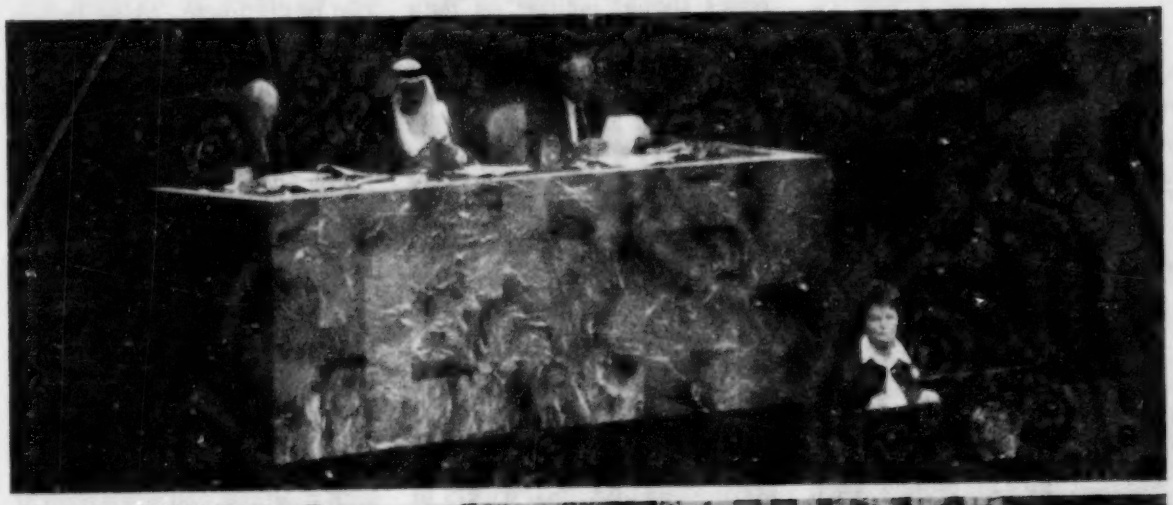
WOMEN 2000

No. 2, 1992

WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE



Above: Norway's Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, addressing the General Assembly, September 1991; below: Women's solidarity march in New York in 1972

INTRODUCTION

This is the third issue of *Women 2000* on the subject of women in politics. No. 2, 1989 focused on women and politics and No. 1, 1990 on women in decision-making. An Expert Group Meeting on the Role of Women in Public Life was held in Vienna in May 1991. The conclusions of the Meeting were intended as a preparation for the Interregional Consultation on Women in Public Life, which was scheduled for September 1991, but postponed because of a lack of adequate resources.

At the May Meeting, the experts agreed that women had the right and responsibility to participate actively in public life and that rather than being seen as a minority issue, equality in public life should be seen as an issue of democratic parity. They also agreed that the perception of politics as "male territory" had to be changed, as did the structures of politics and public life in order to make them more hospitable to women. It was pointed out, however, that in order to change the system, it was necessary for more women to enter party politics as they currently existed and that women should involve themselves in all aspects of politics to avoid marginalizing themselves. The draft platform adopted by the Meeting is reproduced in this publication (see pp.10-13).

The importance of the subject was recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session, held at Vienna in March 1992. The Commission adopted by consensus a resolution expressing its conviction that true democracy could not be achieved without women's full participation in and their contribution to, including that to decision-making, all spheres of life, and urging Governments to increase their efforts to appoint women to all executive decision-making bodies in political, economic and cultural life, so as to achieve incrementally full gender equality. It also urged political parties, trade unions and non-governmental organizations to encourage women to use their rights, to promote women, to put forward women as candidates to all elective posts and to support actively their election to such posts. In another resolution, on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995), the Commission recommended that the regional preparatory conferences should include on their agenda the issue of women in public life, emphasizing their role in politics and decision-making. It also requested the Secretary-General to include in the preparations of the priority theme on peace, "women in international decision-making", for its thirty-ninth session (1995), information on women in public life.

As well as various case studies prepared by the experts on the situation of women in public life in their own countries, two consultants presented papers to the May meeting. One provided a comprehensive analysis and illustrated the situation of women in the industrialized world. It is reproduced here in abbreviated form. The other concentrated on the situation of women in developing countries.

PUBLIC LIFE: WOMEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE*

Women's role in politics and public life in the region categorized by the United Nations as "Western Europe and others" is examined herein. It suggests that there are arenas beyond Governments, legislatures and bureaucracies, important to public life and the political process, in which women should be more equally represented. The premise of the paper is that there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that women do bring and make a difference to politics and public life, but the institutions of society and processes of government need to be adapted to accommodate that difference.

Generalizations from uncoordinated evidence in disparate countries with varied political systems and conditions are difficult to make, so no overview can be complete. Many factors are involved in the differences that women may have helped to make. These include the personalities of leaders of either gender, demographic changes, economic conditions, social attitudes, and the political and cultural environment.[1] None the less, it is possible to conclude that women at the ballot box, in non-governmental organizations, in local government, and in elective and appointive offices can make a difference. They are changing public perceptions of women and women's roles by their example, and when present in appropriate numbers, can make a difference to the way affairs are conducted. They are widening the agendas of public life to include issues of concern to women, and helping to frame policies that are relevant to women's lives and reflect their experience, to the ultimate benefit of the whole community. And, as always, women continue to make a difference in their local communities, rendering a public service too often taken for granted and undervalued.

The prevailing culture in politics and public life derives from the male-oriented Homeric tradition of the citizen soldier and from a political philosophy that confined women and women's concerns to the private sphere of domesticity. In Europe the industrial revolution

---

* Based on a paper prepared by Virginia Willis for the Expert Group Meeting on the Role of Women in Public Life, Vienna, 21-24 May 1991.

emphasized the division between private and public life, which, as it became increasingly sectorized and hierarchical, became even more inimical to women's involvement. Women and women's interests in public life have a long tradition of exclusion to overcome.

Public life embraces the formal political legislative and administrative areas of government, but goes wider. At one level, the political processes of public life involve a continuous reconciliation of interests within and between the important social and economic actors, even outside governmental and parliamentary institutions. In a fair, representative and efficient society, women should be present in appropriate numbers, visible and articulate participants at policy-making levels in all the forums that contribute to the wider political process, as well as executors of such policy once made. Government, parliament, political parties and the administrative bureaucracies are at the heart of the public realm but in the modern State, interest organizations, and especially economic interest organizations such as trade unions, and industrial and employers' organizations, exercise a powerful influence on public policy-making as they refine, define, articulate and seek to further the particular concerns of their members. At another level, public life includes activities outside the domestic sphere, however low key and local, that concern the public weal. It is in this area that women have been pre-eminent.

It is generally the women's non-governmental organizations that represent, articulate and lobby for women's interests in the corporative State, but they have little economic or political muscle. They have always been marginalized, with nothing like the power and influence of other interest groups, such as trade unions, employers' federations or professional associations. None of these groups have been forward in espousing the particular concerns of women, even when, as with the trade unions, women make up a significant proportion of the membership. Many unions are, however, now starting to examine the proportion of women in their structures, and adopting policies to increase women's participation at every level including in decision-making bodies. Employers' associations have been slower in making changes. Much that these major interest groups seek to achieve, however, is undoubtedly relevant and important to women.

There are variations in how interest groups and their power are institutionalized and associated with the legislative and executive functions of government in different countries. Available statistics are haphazard but present a consistent picture; women are everywhere absent from or vastly underrepresented in the leadership of trade unions and employers' organizations, in the judiciary, important professional groupings, high university positions and the media. Women's underrepresentation in top jobs almost everywhere is related not only to their influence within the interest associations, but also in the public sector within quasi-governmental structures. The public realm includes, for example, official consultative, executive, regulatory and advisory boards, which can be very important. Senior professional and business people eminent in their associations are a kind of talent pool for such bodies whose members tend to be selected and appointed partly by virtue of their experience and leadership positions in interest organizations. Excluded from these, women are denied the possibility of making their full and proper contribution not only to the policies of interest organizations themselves, but to public decision-making in which these may be closely involved. Gender-disaggregated statistics that reveal the degree of the gender imbalance in the corporative institutions involved in public life, of which public boards are only one facet, are not everywhere routinely collected. Wherever there are breakdowns by subject, women are shown to be generally much more numerous in bodies dealing with social services, health, and consumer affairs, and though the number of women appointees has almost certainly increased, their distribution is less likely to have changed.

For a variety of reasons - whether because they offer a congenial, non-threatening atmosphere because of the barriers to women's full participation and leadership in male-dominated institutions, because they address issues of concern primarily to women or because they schedule meetings at times convenient to women's domestic responsibilities - women have most often participated in public affairs through their membership in women's organizations. The activities in which women have preferred to participate in greatest numbers have often been ad hoc, short term, close to home and of immediate relevance to themselves, their families and their communities. Women are prominent in a range of voluntary organizations, community action groups, neighbourhood and civic groups, grass-roots environmental concerns, and resident and parent-teacher associations. They tend to be particularly active in community-help activities, such as distributing "meals-on-wheels" to the housebound, campaigning to save a neighbourhood park or to establish a woman's refuge or children's playgroup, campaigning for the homeless or for battered and abused women, agitating to get local child-care services established, marching to ban nuclear weapons, and protesting the destruction of the environ-

READEX
FICHE

ment.[2] Women have been particularly active in campaigning for peace in a myriad organizations. Their preferred activities have generally been characterized as problem solving rather than institution building. These have not usually been regarded as political per se, or as part of public life, and certainly not by those women engaged in them, who often regard politics as something alien and masculine, grand scale and removed from everyday life.[3]

> *"The role and status of women in the system of international relations and global intercourse as a whole have been greatly ignored and submerged. Not only are women and children the majority of victims of economic failures, of famines, of wars and social strife, of educational bias, but taking women and their views into the decision-making process will, by and large, contribute to democratic and human outcomes."*
>
> Margarita Papandreou

Such grass-roots activities do have a political import and are indeed intended to affect public policy even if on a local and community level. They address issues of public concern, and are highly political in the sense that they redistribute resources, solve urgent needs and address needs not identified by conventional political actors. They operate, however, outside established political institutions and political parties and so, it is argued, have not been recognized as a rightful facet of political and public life. It is not that women do not take part in public life, it is rather that what they do is not categorized as such, and that they raise issues which have not usually been legitimated by the concern and attention of the establishment, geared as it is to a masculine view of political priorities.

The usual excuse for women's disproportionate absence from appointive office in public life, that it reflects women's innate lack of interest in politics, is difficult to sustain. Conventional definitions of political activity have the disadvantage of adhering to overwhelmingly masculine standards of what is political and political activity.[4] Traditional views of political participation assume male norms of citizenship, and have been described as gender myopic, showing women as failing to behave in the same way as men. Even so, the changing lifestyles of women in the developed world, their increasing rates of education, employment, organizational affiliation and appreciation of where their interests lie, are having an impact in reducing differences in participation rates in politics as conventionally defined.[5] Especially outside North America, women's experience especially within grass-roots or other voluntary associations is too often ignored or discounted by those, usually men, judging women's qualifications for appointed public office.

The exclusion of women from positions of power in public life denies society the special contribution that women, whose life experience and priorities are often very different from those of men, may make to decision-making. Women, it is argued, can bring distinctive values and priorities and perspectives to public life, since their traditional preoccupation with the home and family make them particularly sensitive to issues and decisions that affect women, children and every aspect of family life.[6] The responsibilities that fall primarily on them, often additional to others outside the home, of running a household, feeding, nurturing and supporting the family have caused them to develop strengths, skills, perspectives and priorities that may be different from those of men and complementary to them. Their different life experiences and responsibilities can bring a different dimension to decision-making, and improve the decisions not only for women but for the whole community.

> *"Over and above the philosophical concept of 'parity democracy', political parties are beginning to realize that women constitute a political resource on which it becomes profitable to wager electorally."*
>
> Inter-Parliamentary Union

Sociologists argue that it is the social learning process that gives each sex a specific gender identity; that men and women internalize different cultural traits. The difference women can make may be based on more than situational factors, and only accentuated and developed by them. The case has been argued that women speak "in a different voice" because certain attributes may be linked to gender. Attachment, affiliation, empathy and interdependence are stressed by women, who tend to favour a "web" culture of affiliation, while men have a more hierarchical male perception of the world as a "ladder", stressing competition, independence, separation and formal rights.[7] The respective sets of values, however derived, are not exclusively gender-based, and both are clearly useful to society and complementary.

Women can develop different leadership styles from those of their male peers, which enhance their performance. Studies in occupational psychology have shown that women tend to identify more with the people who will be affected by their decisions than do their male counterparts. The impact of their decisions is a factor more often taken into account by women decision makers, which could have important implications, for example, to any public body concerned to make recommendations that are universally acceptable.[8] Women tend to be more democratic and friendly, more open to change and to have

a greater ability to work collectively.[9] This theme has been developed, arguing that as women value caring, being involved, helping and being responsible, as they do not hesitate to make intuitive decisions and prefer to structure their organizations as grids rather than hierarchies, they are more likely to fulfil the collaborative ideal of leadership now thought to be most appropriate in the modern world.[10]

> *"Creative women are not necessarily those who hold political power ... [but] ... those who introduce into life other and new dimensions of the human experience and vision. The concept of power underlying the expression 'political power' is a mechanistic one but we no longer live in the realm of simple and harsh mechanical facts. Women, though exercising functions which traditionally belong to the political power sphere can only succeed insofar as they exercise leadership and not power. Political power for women always risks appropriation of its goals by those who have no interest in the issues for which women are fighting. Leadership cannot be wiped out by electoral vote. It means sense of purpose and direction, the capacity to generate energy. It is a permanent commitment to others and to society."*
> Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo

Recent research has underlined how women's values and priorities put them at a distinct disadvantage in political competition with men. The current system of obtaining political office, especially office higher than that at the local level, is highly individualized and competitive. It emphasizes characteristics, such as a driving ambition for personal advancement, that tend to disregard or discount other social responsibilities and personal relationships, and is held to be fundamentally inconsistent with women's status and role orientation.[11] Discussion of gender-based values and characteristics clearly involves the danger of gender stereotyping and the confining of women to certain spheres of competence, as in the past. But as the authors of a study of the political behaviour of women in Europe concluded, "neurophysiologists, biologists and psychologists are in fact confirming the feminist slogan on women and a different way of doing politics, and not the male chauvinist one of a women's place is in the home".[12] Qualities known as "female" are needed in public life, to balance the preponderance of "male" qualities.

The fewer the number of women in public life, however, the less they are likely to be able confidently to assert distinctively female values, priorities and characteristics. As a minority operating in a male domain, most women public figures, to be accepted and to function on a basis of equality with men, have had to adapt to and adopt the male priorities predominating in public life. Minorities, such as women who are successful in a male world, according to a classic theory of minority behaviour, absorb the dominant culture to such an extent that they tend to dissociate themselves from other women, to underrate their own success and to perceive any discrimination they meet as a result of their own shortcomings.[13] It takes a minority of a certain minimum size, 30-35 per cent, to be able to influence the culture of the group and to facilitate alliances between group members.[14] That theory may explain why lone women who reach high office have often appeared not to bring distinctively female values to their office.

Where women are in power in sufficient numbers there is evidence that they do indeed behave differently than their male colleagues. On a broad canvas, the new political movement, the Greens, in which from the beginning women have played a leading role, has tried new forms of politics and collaborative, non-hierarchical systems that better reflect women's ways of working. A report on the working of the local council of a suburb of Sweden showed how an increase in women's representation to 40-48 per cent led to changes in the political climate, with debates reported to be more to the point, language more concrete and accessible, male officials daring to acknowledge family obligations and give them priority over political obligations as the basis of decision-making broadened to include women's perspectives.[15]

The factors that affect women's style of work in political and public life may also be at the root of their different political attitudes and policy preferences. The perceived wisdom, until the mid-1970s, was that women were more conservative than men in their political attitudes.[16] The changing life experience of women, however, together with the higher numbers of women in paid employment, in trade unions and in higher education, are among the factors apparently having an effect on women's political and voting preferences. Evidence from a number of countries suggests that women are now tending increasingly to vote for the more liberal parties and candidates, possibly reflecting, among other factors, the nurturing, caring attitudes ascribed to them. Studies reflect differences of degree rather than absolute differences in gender attitudes. They have, however, considerable potential implications for politics and public life, especially in the light of women's increased use of the ballot box to enforce their opinions. Women have been outstripping men in their use of the ballot in many countries. The effect of a change or reversal of gender differences in rates of voter turnout, as women's lifestyles, education and participation rates in the workforce change, must be to make politicians more responsive to the issues that concern

and mobilize women. There is not much evidence so far of bloc voting among women,[17] though organized strategic voting in support of issues of particular importance to them may well develop to become a strong tactic among women.[18] These considerations have not, naturally, escaped the notice of political parties. The parties of the left have responded most readily to the need to include women in their party structures.[19] Considerations of democracy and justice combine with strategic considerations of appealing to women voters to influence the adoption of measures such as quotas and targets for women's inclusion in party bodies and candidate lists.

> *"The political space belongs to all citizens; politics is everyone's business and affects the lives of each of us ... There is no doubt but that the more women are associated, in numbers corresponding to their percentage of the population, in the political decision-making process, in parties, in elected bodies in Governments and in international bodies, the more they can be associated with this process as protagonists, the more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics. Only then will the concept of democracy find concrete and tangible expression. Indeed, it has been underscored that democracy and the participation of women go hand-in-hand and promote each other mutually."*
>
> Inter-Parliamentary Union

The differences in attitude between men and women in the population at large are reflected by office holders in their legislative behaviour. A study in 1977 showed that women elected officials in the United States of America had a distinctly different orientation from their male counterparts, especially on women's issues. This finding was confirmed in 1981 by a study across all levels of office showing that women had different attitudes from men on issues of economics, war and peace, nuclear energy, capital punishment, legalization of abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment.[20] Studies in Norway - where most political parties now count more than one third of women members and where two successive parliamentary elections have resulted in women occupying about 35 per cent of the parliamentary seats and 40 per cent of the seats in two successive cabinets - are of particular interest because women there do constitute a critical mass in public life. The interests of about two thirds of Norwegian Members of Parlaments (MPs) interviewed in 1989 divided into gender-structured priorities. There remained, however, differences in priorities between women in different parties, and different policies preferred within the priorities.[21]

Women in public life rarely crusade primarily on women's behalf, and few apparently have gone into politics with the primary intention of representing women and their interests. Women candidates who go to the hustings prioritizing women's concerns or proclaiming feminist beliefs are only likely to frighten the electorate. Those who do not mention women's interests at all have done better in the past than those who do. Indeed a male defender of equal rights will defeat a male opposer, but a female defender will lose to a man who says nothing about such issues.[22] Women politicians have generally feared marginalization and undervaluation if they espouse traditional women's issues, which have tended to be regarded as soft options, reflecting the existing male values predominating in legislatures, and indeed in the selection procedures for public life generally.

The tendency for women legislators to be disproportionately numbered among the committee members of parliamentary committees dealing with "soft" subjects, i.e. child welfare, health, education and social security, presents many of them with problems. These are the areas where many subjects of interest to women are most likely to be raised, where women are most likely to have most first-hand experience and where the arguments about making a difference might be borne out, on the "life experience" argument alone. Women MPs frequently resent the "ghettoization" and the marginalization that can result from the perception of such committees as women's committees. There are virtually no studies of the impact of women on those issues or the legislation considered before such committees, nor of the qualities and skills needed to deal with them adequately. These may well be identical to, and certainly no less demanding nor less important than, those needed on the defence, foreign affairs and treasury committees, where women appear more rarely.

There is a suggestion from experience in the Netherlands that, quite apart from a concern with women's issues, women MPs may see their job differently than men, and operate differently within it. They certainly judge themselves different, as being in general more practical, more pragmatic and more sensitive in dealing with their constituents. They are more likely to forge compromises and build bridges with MPs from other parties, especially in support of issues benefiting women, are more diligent in attending such events as party meetings and conferences, and work longer hours than their male colleagues.[23]

Whatever their perception of their job or their primary role in politics, however, the fact is that women, once in power, often tend to become somewhat involved with women's issues, almost despite themselves. The

influence of women in changing agendas is perhaps most directly demonstrated in those studies of Norwegian and Swedish local councils where women make up a critical mass. Researchers report more emphasis being placed on the issues of child care, school concerns and the organization of leisure, as the basis of decision-making in the Swedish councils broadened to include women's perspectives.

The combination of power at the ballot box, pressure from women's organizations and the influence of women in office has influenced the agendas in national forums over the last 20 years or so. Women's issues, not least women's right to share power in public affairs, are now commanding more attention everywhere.

There is also evidence of women having a broader impact. Changes in the "politics of motherhood" stand out as the most important area affected by women's intervention. Care and career policies concerned with child-care institutions, working hours and maternity-leave policies are the area where, according to Norwegian MPs, women's representation has had the most impact in changing party viewpoints. A new category of family-based care policies has emerged high on the agenda of non-Socialist parties, involving State subsidies to families of which the mother stayed at home with young children, care wages and supplementary pension rights for caretakers. Social-welfare policies, including single-parent policies, were next most affected by women's viewpoints, followed by environmental concerns. Party disarmament policies were only slightly more affected than so-called "body politics", to do with abortion, shelters for battered women and incest victims, while perhaps because of the advanced situation already achieved in Norway, policies towards women's own political representation and policies on equal status and equal pay were least affected. In countries where women are not so well placed to make a difference, aspects of such issues as care-and-career policies and social welfare policies, which take sufficient account of changing family and employment patterns, are now being brought to the attention of decision makers, largely by women's organizations, some of which have compiled specific "women's agendas" listing priorities for action.

Women leaders are becoming increasingly acceptable. Eurobarometer surveys show a remarkable decline between 1975 and 1987 in the number of people throughout the European Communities (EC) who would have more confidence in a man than a woman as an MP.[24] It is suggested that one effect of the broadening of the public agenda to include women's concerns has been to stimulate an added demand for the participation of public officials who are themselves women and who know those issues. It could be that an upward draught for women is being created.[25]

The variety visible among women already in public life, in office or in leadership roles in voluntary organizations, is altering stereotypes both of what women in public life are like, and what, for example, a judge, a senator, an environment commissioner, an insurance commissioner, a State secretary or State treasurer might look like. The evidence is certainly that the presence of women in elective and appointive office both directly and indirectly results in recruiting and attracting more women to public life.[26]

Efforts in recent years to accommodate the demands and needs of women, which established institutions have failed to do adequately, have had an impact on the institutions and machinery of government in many countries, although often unrecognized and unanalysed. National machinery for the advancement of women has been set up, or is planned, in many countries, with varying degrees of effectiveness. It may be that when women are fully integrated in decision-making, specialist machinery will wither away; the fear is that it may be vulnerable in a climate of increasing economic recession even before women's advances have made it redundant.

Women's organizations in their infinite variety, whatever their political colour or principal rallying cause, are an important aspect of women making a difference both to women and to society in general, and a major route into public life for women and for advancing women's interests. Since there are proportionately so few women in the institutions of public life, and those who are there do not necessarily see it as their prime task to represent women as such, it is largely the women's organizations who represent, articulate, promote and defend women's interests and special concerns. National and even international federations link the local branches where grass-roots concerns are first manifest, and give those concerns a national platform, lobbying and informing Governments and decision makers on women's issues.

Women's organizations have usually had multiple aims that often include, for example, working for women's rights, contributing to society and supporting the special interests of members. Single-issue groups with a high proportion of women are also effective in making women's voices heard. How women's organizations operate and relate to grass-roots organizations may depend on national traditions of organization. The women's organizations dealing

with issues of sexuality, such as abortion and birth control, and family issues, including divorce, in central and southern Europe tend to prefer to work outside establishment institutions, mistrusting central authorities such as the Church and legal and medical authorities. In northern Europe, they are more integrationist, and give equal weight to issues such as equal opportunities in education, and the labour market, day care and access to decision-making.[27] Abortion is a deeply polarizing subject among women everywhere, but it presents a classic case of women wanting their various voices heard when national legislation is involved.

> *"It is the non-governmental organizations which, in most countries, work in the field to awaken women to their rights and to the importance of participating in political life, and which train them to become political partners of men."*
>
> Inter-Parliamentary Union

Women's non-governmental organizations are also important in making women's voices heard at the international level. International women's organizations represented at the United Nations articulate issues of concern to and for their members, and work actively to affect the content of resolutions and initiatives with a potential worldwide impact. After the Nairobi World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, for example, women in the developed countries were sensitized to the issues of women in development and development aid by the reports of the delegates. Back in their own countries, women have, through a variety of organizations, been pressing these issues with the ministries responsible for overseas aid, and raising the consciousness of aid administrators to the problems that can be created or compounded for women by some aid and development programmes. The establishment of the Women in Development sections of USAID and the World Bank reflects some measure of success for the women and women's organizations at national and international levels pressuring for a recognition of women's interest in aid and its administration. Another example is the new Women's Lobby created to exert pressure on various institutions of the European Community, leading Community-wide campaigns, suggesting new initiatives and encouraging the recruitment and promotion of women to responsible positions in public life and to monitor Community legislation for its impact on women. The Community's first General Assembly in September 1990 saw over 70 delegates representing women's organizations, national coordinating groups and individual member organizations speaking for an estimated 100 million women throughout the Community. The potential for women making a difference at European Community level is much enhanced by the activities of women's non-governmental organizations.

Helga Maria Hernes in an article on women in such organizations, states: "Nowhere do those organizations where women predominate have political clout but they do have mobilizing effects".[28] The changing political landscape affected by women's use of the ballot box, however, is giving the voices of such groups greater resonance. Coalitions and networking between women's organizations to promote priority issues is a common strategy. Such coalitions can demonstrate to policy makers the broad-based community support for issues of importance for women, mobilizing the grassroots membership of even the more traditional women's organizations and their male sympathizers.

Women's non-governmental organizations at the national level include some whose focus and primary concern is for women to take their place among the decision makers, and many other organizations mount campaigns for this. Women's groups play a critical role in educating women on the political process and working to involve them in formal politics, and having them elected or appointed to office. Membership of women's organizations, whether or not they are feminist or political, according to a Scottish study,[29] does have an effect in raising gender and political consciousness among women, and they are also important in keeping female politicians in touch with the reality of women's experience. Work within women's organizations, with their need for the practice of advocacy, and political and administrative skills, has often proved a good launching pad for women to move into politics at either the local or national level. Too often, however, women's skills derived from experience in grass-roots or non-governmental voluntary organizations are overlooked by those making appointments in public life.

Any substantial increase in and guarantee of women's access to politics and public life require critical action to overcome ingrained structural and situational barriers. These may be different in different societies, and they require national and region-specific analysis. They will undoubtedly include recruitment and selection procedures to appointive or elective public office that have a discriminatory effect against women. They will include those factors that contribute to what is known as the "glass ceiling" (that is, the highest level attainable by women, which is well below that attainable by men) for women in private-sector enterprises and public corporations. They may include outright, if unconscious,

discrimination practised at a basic level by the gatekeepers of political and public life who only see women as "little women" and are threatened by female achievement and ambition. Or they may encompass more subtle deterrents such as inhospitable male-oriented political environments, at the extreme "meetings held in smoke-filled men's boozers which are reeking of beer", at hours which make it difficult for women with family responsibilities to attend.[30]

Women's participation in world governance

"1995 provides the opportunity to review women's progress over the past 20 years. It also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations at a time of unprecedented global change and economic and social challenge. With the growth of transnational economic activity, the formation of new groupings of nations, and the renewed impetus of the democratization process, it is imperative that women are part of the decisions that shape and determine these processes.

"The current economic restructuring worldwide provides new opportunities, but can also involve risks and insecurities for women. In many parts of the world, the situation has been exacerbated by the insecurity, both internal and external, that has flowed from increasing inequality both within nations and between nations.

"Deliberations on these problems and the development of new global and regional structures should include women to articulate their perspective and to bring their knowledge, experience, aspirations and vision to bear on the solutions."

From a statement by 28 organizations and agencies of the United Nations system presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session.

More concrete barriers include the lack of money women with potential for politics and public life suffer to a far greater extent than men, and failure to make public provision for family responsibilities that still fall disproportionately on women. They also include those factors in management and business that contribute to women's poor representation in the top ranks and to a glass ceiling. Traditional views of women's roles that undermine women's confidence in their own competence, in the workplace and in public affairs, and unduly irrelevant and demeaning reporting in the media are also factors.

In the United States political women cite four key ingredients necessary for increasing the numbers of women holding public office: (a) the support mechanisms of political parties; (b) money, necessary to both men and women, but harder, for a variety of reasons, for women to come by; (c) women's organizations, which play a critical role in educating women about the political process and stimulating them to run for office; and (d) individual women leaders committed to increasing women's representation in public life.[31]

To political parties must fall the primary responsibility of educating those responsible for selecting candidates in the necessity and desirability of including more women in leadership roles. They have a responsibility to examine and reform their selection and promotion procedures for elective office to make them more gender neutral, to institute measures of positive action to equalize the opportunities for women to be candidates for office, and to enlarge the pool of potential candidates among women by making training and awareness courses more widely accessible and available to them. Trade unions share the duty of making their structures more accessible to women and increasingly they are acting upon it.

More women in top jobs in the private sector would also facilitate a change in the gender composition of the ranks of those in professional associations likely to be eligible for appointive public office, or otherwise active in public life. The private sector, in its own interest also, when demographic factors tend towards its increasing reliance on skilled women, must necessarily examine and adjust training and promotion procedures to allow women to rise to the top ranks. Since the struggle to combine family and career is apparently an important reason for the low proportion of women managers and senior executives, work patterns have to be more flexible, and child care more accessible and affordable in both the public and private sectors. Such arrangements are all too often seen as making things better for women, for working mothers; in fact they would create the conditions for a better balance in family responsibilities between men and women to their common benefit.

The major task must be, however, that of Governments. Gradualist measures of adjustment to make the formal arenas of public and political life more accessible to women, and to prepare women to operate successfully within them, would help. The setting-up of innovative structures to bridge the gap between activism at the neighbourhood level and more formal public life with, for example, advisory committees of women activists appointed to help local government, could bring more women into establishment politics and public life. At the national level, Governments could make an inventory of public appointments, disaggregated by gender and the appointing authority, so that it can be clearly seen in which areas the shortfalls lie. Published routinely, such information would enable women's non-governmental organizations and legislators to put pressure on the right points. The appointing authorities should be made aware

and regularly reminded of the desirability of a gender balance in public life, and trained to recognize the qualities and relevant experience in unorthodox curricula vitae and, especially, of the value and relevance to public appointments of much volunteer experience. Appointive posts should carry clearly defined job descriptions, with the desirable relevant attributes of the holder clearly defined. Data banks with details of women likely to be suitable and willing to be appointed might be compiled by, for example, women's organizations working in cooperation with the appointing authorities.

Governments can encourage change. But gradualist measures of encouragement may not be enough. If quotas are politically unacceptable, "monitored goals" or "time-fixed targets" may be the next best route. Really determined Governments, or even local authorities, can speed the progress of women into public life both by instituting quotas for appointive posts and by insisting that the companies with whom they do business institute good-faith positive action to enable women to reach the highest posts in the private sector in more appropriate numbers.

There is an urgent need for more information, and certainly for statistics, on women in appointive office and in the top jobs relevant to public life everywhere, and also for studies documenting more closely the differences women bring to the processes, priorities, policies and administration of public life. National case studies documenting the situation of women in public life and analysing barriers, and the means to bring them down, are a starting point. Issue case studies, tracing where and how and in what way women have made a difference on particular issues, would be valuable. A detailed study of how women have forced the issue of women in development onto the international agenda might be one suitable subject for a cross-national study of the difference women can make. National case studies by non-governmental organizations, tracing how far and in what way they have had an impact on various issues, would also be valuable. Without all of these, there is too much conjecture, not enough evidence.

Meanwhile, much will depend on women themselves, in elective and appointive office, in women's organizations and, perhaps most importantly, at the basic level of the polls, pressing their own case for inclusion in politics and public life.

From the disparate and inadequate evidence available in a situation where women are so rarely in a position to effect a difference, women's most demonstrable impact on public life so far has largely been in making some modest differences for women themselves, in making some small progress towards equity, in pushing at the doors to full inclusion in public affairs and in forcing them ajar to get their particular concerns an airing in public forums. There is evidence that women's participation may indeed be changing the tenor, content and priorities of public affairs, and affecting policy outcomes in some small way, at the local level at least, where women are more numerous, but such changes are not much documented. The full extent of the difference they can make has not yet been demonstrated, and perhaps it cannot be, as the values and different culture they bring are absorbed by the institutions in which they participate, and as they themselves adapt to new roles and requirements. Any changes women effect are likely to be gradual, and probably hard to measure, quantify or demonstrate. What is sure is that women are still too often the exception, the outsiders, the anomaly in all the centres of power and influence, in the interlocking spheres of both private and public sectors. When at last they can participate as "just citizens in a democratic polity", the beneficiaries will not be women alone; they will also be those whose interests have all too often, and for too long, taken priority in politics and public life, but who may welcome the opportunity to share more equally the burdens, responsibilities and rewards of both private and public life, to the ultimate benefit of the whole community.

DRAFT PLATFORM FOR THE INTERREGIONAL CONSULTATION

The Expert Group on the Role of Women in Public Life, held at Vienna from 21 to 24 May 1991, recommended for adoption by the interregional consultation on women in public life, which was to be held at Vienna in 1991, the draft platform presented below.

Public life means participating in informal and voluntary activities at the community level, as well as participating in formal positions of public responsibility and public office. The two are closely linked. Public policy reflects the interests of all people in society and women's involvement in key decision-making positions is essential.

A. Women's rights and responsibilities with respect to participation and leadership

The participation of women and men in public life on a basis of parity should be a priority objective of Member States because of the principles of human rights incorporated in the Charter of the United Nations and guaranteed by most national constitutions. The participation of women and men on the basis of parity is a prerequisite of the social contract.

Participation is a responsibility of all citizens. Effective solutions to international, national and local problems can best be found when all citizens can exercise on an equal basis their right to participate fully in the decision-making process.

Although women have always been part of the political process and have always contributed to the public good, they have not necessarily participated at the decision-making level. This has been true in crises involving national construction and reconstruction, in liberation struggles and in daily life, especially in terms of the contribution women make to the national economy, regardless of whether it is reflected in government statistics.

Women constitute a key national resource, whose ideas, creative solutions and concern for the cohesiveness of society can help change the quality of public life. Their contributions introduce an enriching dimension to the substance and process of policy-making. Women's exercising of their right to have equal access to positions of public responsibility will make public life more representative.

B. Strategies and instruments for political action

All nations must seek remedies for the underrepresentation of women in public life. Specific dimensions of the problem differ from country to country. Although institutional structures and opportunities for participation vary widely, steps must be taken to ensure equal participation. There is one clear and common factor: women are generally absent from the key areas of decision-making. Strategies must deal with constraints that women face at the individual and institutional levels, as well as in the context of the values held by society. It is necessary to remove constraints that stem from a legacy inimical to women's inclusion in order to facilitate women's full participation.

Both long-term and short-term measures are necessary; such measures include educating girls and boys in their shared civic rights and duties. Society as a whole, including parents, schools and the media, has the responsibility of preparing future generations to accept and encourage equality.

To promote equality, steps must be initiated immediately to promote the full participation of women in public life.

The low number of women in decision-making positions illustrates that they have not been made equal partners. Strategies to promote the full participation of women should include:

- Modifying institutional structures to reflect and facilitate participation on the basis of parity.
- Stimulating public awareness of women's right to participate and the benefits they bring to the quality of decision-making.
- Using the ballot box as a means of promoting women's rights, interests and concerns.
- Establishing targets, goals or quotas to ensure equal participation on the basis of parity;
- Encouraging incentives for equality through national and international public policy; Governments that provide financial support to the electoral process should design such support to provide incentives for equal participation; international agencies that provide assistance in areas with a major impact on women should ensure that such assistance encourages equality in decision-making.
- Encouraging methods of support, including training, at the local, national and international levels.
- Calling upon experienced women leaders to contribute actively as important role models.
- Reinforcing cooperation between women by emphasizing information exchange and mutual support and by developing tactics to identify and realize common objectives.
- Removing demeaning stereotypes, ensuring that the portrayal of women by the media is fair and objective, and including women in all decision-making processes of the media.
- Implementing all United Nations recommendations to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions.
- Expanding national and international statistics and research efforts to include gender-disaggregated data on women's political, social and economic activities in order to reflect the reality of their contributions; the full range of women's contributions to society should be reflected in media and curriculum reform at all levels of education.
- Ensuring the equal participation of women in areas of the private sector that have a direct effect on the public.

These strategies require advocacy and monitoring not only by national bodies, but also by United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations.

C. Women's contribution to politics: public issues with women's perspective

All public issues are of concern to women. Some issues have a particular link to wom-

en's distinctive experience and concerns. While the specific issues of concern will differ from country to country, depending on the specific circumstances, and should be defined in each national context, there are broad themes that unite women everywhere. These generate the added and distinctive values and approaches of women in policy-making.

Women's special contribution to public life has been said to include:

- A particular concern for justice and the ethical dimension of politics derived in part from their having experienced injustice.
- A talent for setting priorities and accomplishing complex tasks learned in the course of balancing competing demands for their time and attention in the family, at work and in the community.
- An awareness of the value of consensus and agreement because of their central role in social relationships;
- A concern for future generations.

Women have always known about problems in society that have either been ignored or considered merely "private" issues. Women in public life have helped to transform these problems into issues of public concern. Women in leadership roles can help make policies more appropriate to deal with these problems.

The de facto denial of the right of women to full participation may be considered in the context of the broader issue of basic human rights for women. This has heightened the awareness of the need for fairness and justice as a motivating ethic in public life.

Women's lack of self-determination is an obstacle that women should feel compelled to overcome. At its most extreme, this lack of self-determination is constituted by violence against women in the family and elsewhere in society and by the debasement of women through pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation. Similarly, many population policies do not respect women's health, well-being and basic human rights as set forth in international conventions.

Women are particularly concerned with determining the course of the common future of humankind. While many of today's problems are the result of decisions in which women did not participate, tomorrow's solutions should be designed today with the full participation of women.

It is incumbent upon women to provide innovations in public life and to propose new styles of cooperation among the peoples of the world. This implies the formulation and defence of a new international order that bridges the gap between developed and developing countries. A healthy, productive economy is a goal for women who bear an especially heavy burden due to poverty and underdevelopment. One of women's future tasks is to be the spokespersons of a new ethic that will be the basis of international law.

Women recognize the significance of adequate public investment in education, social services and the conservation and management of the natural environment as a way of preparing today for the future.

At the international level, women must demand that their concerns are reflected in all debates on the future of the world.

WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY
A UNITED NATIONS STUDY*

Few women occupy positions in public decision-making. While their numbers have been increasing slowly in many countries, in most there has been little change. Only in a few countries has the proportion of women reached a point where it can be said that their influence on public policy is comparable with that of men.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 reflect the significance that the United Nations attached to the importance of equality as part of the process of the advancement of women.

During a meeting in Vienna in September 1989, scholars and political practitioners examined the obstacles to women's participation in decision-making and suggested remedies. Responding to a concern that the information presented to the meeting and the conclusions arising from it should be available to a wider audience, the Government of the Netherlands provided funds to enable the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations to prepare this book.

This book, published by Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, is now available from the United Nations Sales Section, Geneva or New York.

* Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992.

Women in the government of the 150 countries with parliaments as of 31 October1991

Country	Date of validity	Member of national government: Head of State	Head of government	Minister(s)**	Deputy Minister(s)	Other ministerial functions
Afghanistan*	06/91	No	No	2(7 %)	No	Dept. Heads
Albania*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Algeria*	07/91	No	No	2(7 %)	No	No
Angola*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Antigua and Barbuda	07/91	No	No			
Argentina*	07/91	No	H.S.			
Australia*	08/91	No	No	3(7 %)	No	No
Austria*	06/91	No	No	2(7 %)	No	1 s.s.
Bahamas	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Bangladesh*	07/91	No	Yes	—	—	—
Barbados	04/91	Yes	No	No	1(7 %)	No
Belgium*	06/91	No	No	No	No	3 s.s (25%)
Belize	07/91	Yes	No	—	—	—
Benin	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Bhutan	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Bolivia*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Botswana	05/91	No	H.S.	1(7 %)	No	No
Brazil*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Bulgaria*	07/91	No	No	1(7 %)	—	—
Cameroon*	06/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Canada*	06/91	No	No	7(7 %)	No	6 p.s.
Cape Verde*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Cent. African Rep.*	03/91	No	No	1(7 %)	1(7 %)	No
Chile*	06/91	No	H.S.	1(7 %)	—	3 sub-s.s.
China*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Colombia*	11/91	No	H.S.	1(7 %)	—	—
Comoros	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Congo*	11/91	No	No	—	—	—
Costa Rica*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Côte d'Ivoire*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Cuba*	06/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Cyprus*	06/91	No	No	No	No	No
Czechoslovakia*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea*	07/91	No	No	2(7 %)	2(7 %)	—
Denmark*	05/91	Yes	No	4(21%)	No	No
Djibouti*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Dominica	07/91	No	Yes	No	No	No
Dominican Republic*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Ecuador*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Egypt*	07/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
El Salvador*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Equatorial Guinea*	07/91	No	H.S.	1(7 %)	No	No
Estonia*	11/91	No	No	—	—	—
Ethiopia*	11/91	No	No	—	—	—
Finland*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
France*	06/91	No	Yes	4(21%)	2(20%)	1 s.s. (6.25%)
Gabon*	07/91	No	No	3(1.1%)	No	1 s.s.
Gambia	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Germany*	06/91	No	No	5(7 %)		3 s.s.
Greece*	06/91	No	No	1(7 %)	1(7 %)	3 s.s.s.
Grenada	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Guatemala*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Guinea-Bissau	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Guyana	05/91	No	No	6(30%)	No	No
Haiti	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Honduras*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Hungary*	07/91	No	No	2(6%)	2(7 %)	No
Iceland*	07/91	Yes	No	—	—	—
India*	05/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Indonesia*	06/91	No	H.S.	2(7 %)	No	No
Iran (Isl. Rep. of)*	07/91	No	No	N/	No	No
Iraq*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Ireland*	07/91	Yes	No	—	—	—
Israel*	05/91	No	No	No 1(7 %)	No	No
Italy*	07/91	No	No	2(6%)	No	3 sub-s.s. (4.5%)
Jamaica*	07/91	Vac.	No	—	—	—
Japan*	06/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Jordan*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Kenya*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Kiribati	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Kuwait*	11/91	No	No	No	No	No
Lao People's Dem. Republic*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Latvia*	11/91	No	—	—	—	—
Lebanon*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Liberia*	11/91	No	No	—	—	—
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Liechtenstein	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Lithuania*	11/91	No	—	—	—	—
Luxembourg*	07/91	No	No	No	No	1 s.s.
Madagascar*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Malawi	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Malaysia*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Maldives	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Malta*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Mauritius	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Mexico*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Monaco*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Mongolia*	06/91	No	No	No	—	—
Morocco*	06/91	No	No	No	No	No
Mozambique*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Namibia*	07/91	No	No	2(7 %)	1(7 %)	No
Nauru	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Nepal*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Netherlands*	07/91	Yes	No	—	—	—
New Zealand*	06/91	Yes	No	3(11.5%)	No	No

Country	Date of validity	Member of national government: Head of State	Head of government	Minister(s)**	Deputy Minister(s)	Other ministerial functions
Nicaragua*	05/91	Yes	No	No	No	No
Niger*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Norway*	06/91	No	Yes	9(47.4%)	Various	No
Pakistan*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Panama*	07/91	No	H.S.	No	No	No
Papua New Guinea*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Paraguay*	07/91	No	H.S.	1(7 %)	No	No
Peru*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Philippines*	07/91	Yes	No	1(3.6%)	No	32(20.5%) 1/
Poland*	06/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Portugal*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Republic of Korea*	07/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Romania*	07/91	No	No	No	No	No
Rwanda*	04/91	No	H.S.	No	No	No
Saint Kitts and Nevis	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Saint Lucia	04/91	No	No	No	No	No
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
San Marino*	07/91	No	H.S.	1(10%)	No	No
Sao Tome and Principe	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Senegal*	04/91	No	No	2(9.5%)	No	No
Seychelles	06/91	No	H.S.	3(30%)	No	No
Sierra Leone	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Singapore*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Solomon Islands	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
South Africa	05/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Spain*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Sri Lanka*	07/91	No	No	1(3.8%) 2/	—	—
Suriname*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Swaziland	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Sweden*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Switzerland*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Syrian Arab Republic*	07/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Thailand*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Togo*	08/91	No	No	—	—	—
Tonga	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Trinidad and Tobago	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Tunisia*	07/91	No	No	No	No	1 s.s
Turkey*	03/91	No	No	1(7 %)	No	No
Tuvalu	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Uganda*	04/91	No	H.S.	4(7 %)	4(7 %)	No
Union of Soviet Socialist Rep.	06/91	No	No	2(7 %)	1(7 %)	No
United Arab Emirates*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
United Kingdom*	06/91	Yes	No	4(13.8%)	No	No
United Republic of Tanzania*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
United States of America*	05/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Uruguay*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Vanuatu	04/91	No	No	No	No	No
Venezuela*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Viet Nam*	06/91	No	No	No	2(7 %)	No
Western Samoa	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Yemen*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Yugoslavia*	06/91	No	No	No	No	No
Zaire*	07/91	No	No	—	—	—
Zambia*	07/91	No	H.S.	—	—	—
Zimbabwe*	06/91	No	No	3(0.6%)	6(7 %)	No

1/ Philippines: Deputies, Under-Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries.

2/ Sri Lanka: 1 (out of 26) Cabinet Ministers: (3.8%); 2 (out of 23) Ministers not in the Cabinet: (8.7%); 3 (out of 29) Ministers of State: (10.3%).

* Parliament represented in the Inter-Parliamentary Union as of 31/10/91

** Excluding Head of Government when she is the Prime Minister

— No information available

H.S. There is no Prime Minister and the Head of State is the Head of the Government

p.s. Parliamentary Secretary

s.s. Secretary of State

sub-s.s Sub-Secretary of State

u.s.s. Under Secretary of State

vac. Vacant

Source: *Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women and Political Power, Series "Reports and Documents", No. 19, Geneva, 1992, p. 163.*

CONFERENCE 95

The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace will be held at Beijing, China, from 4 to 15 September 1995.

The Commission on the Status of Women is the preparatory body for the Conference and, as such, discussed organizational and substantive issues pertaining to the Conference and its preparations at its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions. In order to provide readers with the current status, Commission resolutions 35/4 and 36/8 as well as decision 35/101 are reproduced below in full.

Resolution 35/4. Preparations for the world conference on women in 1995

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 45/129 of 14 December 1990, in which the General Assembly endorsed Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/12 of 24 May 1990 recommending that a world conference on women should be held in 1995,

Taking into account Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 on the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000,

Considering that the world conference on women should result in the full implementation of key aspects of the Forward-looking Strategies up to the year 2000,

Considering also that the world conference on women should focus world attention on the situation of women and should result in a renewal of political commitment,

1. *Decides* to prepare for consideration by the world conference on women in 1995 a programme of action comprising a limited number of issues that have been identified as representing a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of the majority of women;

2. *Decides also* that, within the programme of action, goals should be established, if possible in quantitative terms, and concise, action-oriented guidelines should be provided to accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

3. *Decides further* that the programme of action should continue to focus on equality, development and peace and should include the following elements:

(a) The strengthening of efforts at the national and international levels, taking into account the circumstances in each country, to increase awareness among men and women of women's rights under international conventions and national law;

(b) The implementation of special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in decision-making in the economic, social and political spheres;

(c) The strengthening of world-wide efforts to end illiteracy among women and girls by the year 2000;

(d) The establishment of specific programmes for improving the conditions of women and girls living in poverty, particularly those living in extreme poverty, by, *inter alia*, adequate training to develop their skills and capabilities;

(e) The establishment of specific programmes aimed at improving women's and girls' health by ensuring them access to adequate maternal health care, family planning and nutrition;

(f) The implementation of policies to prevent, control and reduce violence against women and girls in the family, the workplace and society;

(g) The establishment or strengthening of national institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;

(h) The establishment of special programmes aimed at meeting the specific needs of refugee, displaced and migrant women and girls and those living in conflict areas;

(i) The elaboration of ways and means of using new and high technologies, as well as scientific research, to benefit women;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-seventh session, a report on existing technical and financial cooperation targeting programmes in favour of women, as well as guidelines for a comprehensive plan to overcome constraints and increase such cooperation with regard to the elements set out above;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-sixth session a draft report to serve as a working document for the elaboration of the programme of action, based on existing United Nations data, bearing in mind that the programme of action should be concrete and concise, capable of leading to feasible, effective and immediate action, as well as awareness and political will on the part of Governments and governmental and non-governmental organizations;

6. *Requests* the bodies, regional commissions, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the non-governmental organizations concerned, to contribute to the preparations for the world conference on women in 1995;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its thirty-sixth session on the contribution of the bodies, regional commissions, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the non-governmental agencies concerned, to the preparations for the conference.

Resolution 36/8. Preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, [32] endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/20 of 26 May 1987, in which the Council decided that the Commission on the Status of Women should be designated as the preparatory body for world conferences on women,

Recalling further Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 of 24 May 1990, on the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000,

Recalling also its resolution 35/4 on preparations for the world conference on women in 1995 and decision 35/101 on the title of the Conference,

A

Organization of the Conference

Noting with appreciation the offers made by the Governments of Austria and China to act as host for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, and the forum for non-governmental organizations,

Taking into consideration General Assembly resolution 46/98 of 16 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Commission to decide on the venue of the Fourth World Conference on Women not later than at its thirty-sixth session, in accordance with Commission decision 35/102, bearing in mind that preference should be given to the region that had not yet hosted a world conference on women,

Considering the duration of previous world conferences on women, as well as similar United Nations conferences,

Bearing in mind that the Conference in 1995 coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations,

Affirming the importance to the success of the Conference of the maximum participation of Governments at the highest possible level, of intergovernmental organizations, organizations of the United Nations system and interested non-governmental organizations, as well as other regional organizations acting through their representatives to the Commission,

Recalling that the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/98, requested the Secretary-General to appoint not later than 1992 the Secretary-General of the Conference,

Recalling its resolution 35/4, in which it decided to prepare a programme of action for consideration by the Conference,

1. *Decides*

(a) To accept the offer of the Government of China to act as host for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985;

(b) That the Conference should be of a duration of ten working days;

(c) That the Conference should be held at Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995;

2. *Also decides* to recommend that participation in the Conference should be open to:

(a) All States Members of the United Nations or of any of the specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency;

(b) Representatives of organizations that have received a standing invitation from the General Assembly to participate in the sessions and the work of all international conferences convened under its auspices in the capacity of observers to participate in the Conference in that capacity, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988;

(c) Representatives of the national liberation movements recognized in its region by the Organization of African Unity to participate in the Conference in the capacity of observers, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3280 (XXIX) of 10 December 1974;

(d) The executive heads of the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as interested organizations of the United Nations system;

(e) Other interested intergovernmental organizations, to be represented by observers at the Conference;

(f) Interested non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, to be represented by observers at the Conference;

(g) Individuals who, in recognition of their personal contributions to the advancement of women, are invited by the Secretary-General;

(h) Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

3. *Requests* the Economic and Social Council to request the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to consider on a priority basis, in advance of the Conference, the granting of consultative status to more non-governmental organizations concerned with the advancement of women, with particular attention being given to applications from non-governmental organizations from developing countries, and also requests that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations be provided with additional resources to deal with the additional workload;

4. *Recommends* that the arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968, be reviewed to make consultative status more accessible to non-governmental organizations, particularly those from developing countries;

5. *Recommends* that the Secretary-General appoint a woman as Secretary-General of the Conference, not later than

1992, who should have international stature in relation to the advancement of women and experience in the United Nations system, and who would assume primary responsibility for the preparation of the Conference;

6. *Also recommends* that, in appointing the necessary staff for the Conference, the Secretary-General include persons from the developing and the least developed countries, taking into consideration equitable geographical distribution;

7. *Decides* that the agenda for the Conference shall include:

(a) The second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000;

(b) The Platform for Action;

(c) The main conclusions and recommendations of regional preparatory conferences;

(d) Institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Platform;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-seventh session, containing a first draft, which will serve as a working document for the elaboration of the Platform of Action, taking as a basis all guidelines contained in Commission resolution 35/4, the impact of the changes that have taken place in the international community on the status of women, the importance of integrating gender perspectives in policy-making in all areas and at all levels, the need to give priority to the situation of rural women, in particular in developing countries, and differences in priorities among regions, based on a full input from the organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other regional organizations acting through their representatives to the Commission;

9. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-seventh session a report containing (a) information on data that would be used in the formulation of the second report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and (b) an outline of the second report, in which special emphasis should be given to the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies, contained in the annex to Council resolution 1990/15, in particular those referring to the condition of women in developing countries;

10. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to prepare draft rules of procedure for consideration by the Commission at its thirty-eighth session;

B

Preparatory process

Emphasizing the importance of national preparatory activities in focusing national attention on the issue of the status and advancement of women for national machinery to assess the situation and mobilize national non-governmental organizations and individuals, with a view to improving national performance in the advancement of women,

Considering the importance of activities for the advancement of women that have taken place at the regional level since International Women's Year and recognizing the necessity of providing for an exchange of national experiences and the elaboration of regional priorities and perspectives for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, and to the year 2000,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/9 of 24 May 1990 on the second report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,

Recognizing the importance of non-governmental organizations in the preparations for the Conference at the national, regional and global levels, especially the forum for non-governmental organizations, which will take place prior to and partially simultaneously with the Conference,

Acknowledging the important role of women entrepreneurs, notably in small and medium-sized enterprises, in mobilizing resources and in promoting economic growth and socio-economic development,

Convinced that promotion of the Conference requires the creative and effective use of public information,

1. *Recommends* that Governments establish a national committee or designate a national focal point to initiate and promote preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, by organizing and coordinating national activities, including assembling information and gender-disaggregated statistics for the elaboration of national reports on the situation of women, and increasing public awareness about the Conference, and requests that reports on such activities be made available to the Secretary-General;

2. *Urges* organizations of the United Nations system, at the national level, to cooperate with national efforts to prepare for the Conference and to coordinate their activities through the United Nations Resident Coordinator;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to inform Governments about the recommendation regarding national committees or focal points;

4. *Recommends* that the national reports cited in paragraph 1 above cover the period from 1985 to the present;

5. *Urges* the organizations of the United Nations system to provide support, on request, to the preparation of national reports;

6. *Recommends* that regional conferences already scheduled include in their agendas preparations for the World Conference and suggests that, in those regions that have not yet scheduled them, regional conferences to prepare for the World Conference be organized under the auspices of the corresponding regional commission;

7. *Requests* the regional conferences to identify regional trends, priorities, obstacles and innovative suggestions for future action and that the results of those regional conferences be provided to the Commission on the Status of Women not later than at its thirty-ninth session;

8. *Recommends* that regional conferences include in their agenda the issue of women in public life, emphasizing their role in politics and decision-making;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in the preparations of the priority theme on peace, "women in international decision-making", for the Commission at its thirty-ninth session, information on women in public life;

10. *Recommends* that a public information strategy for the Conference be designed, using information mechanisms that reach the greatest number of people and based on the conference themes, in particular those related to development;

11. *Also recommends* that regional conferences include in their agenda the issue of entrepreneurship and the advancement of women, emphasizing the need to facilitate an overall entrepreneurial activity through appropriate economic policies, training, access to credit, information and other support systems;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to plan and implement an information campaign and to issue a new bulletin entitled *Conference 95* twice a year to disseminate information on preparatory activities for the Conference at all levels in all official languages;

13. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to provide Governments with a concise set of guidelines for public information campaigns at the national level and with periodic information packages that can be made available to national mass media and non-governmental organizations;

14. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its thirty-seventh session on the planning and implementation of the complete information campaign, including its priorities and resource needs;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include the Conference as part of the celebrations for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations;

C

Forum for non-governmental organizations

Recalling successful forums for non-governmental organizations held in Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi,

Acknowledging the offer by the host Government to all non-governmental organizations and individuals wishing to attend the forum in Beijing,

1. *Emphasizes* the importance of close proximity between the forum and the Fourth World Conference: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, as well as some concurrence in time;

2. *Invites* the committee of non-governmental organizations arranging the forum and national and regional activities to provide information, including media arrangements, to the Commission on the Status of Women through a report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the Conference;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of unrestricted participation by the media in covering the forum;

D

Resources for the Conference and its preparations

Recalling General Assembly resolution 46/98 of 16 December 1991, in which concern was expressed that the resources for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, were not sufficient, and Assembly resolution 46/185 of 20 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that adequate resources are provided for the preparation of the Conference during the biennium 1992-1993,

Desiring to ensure the maximum representation by Governments, especially of the least developed countries, in the regional preparatory process and in the Conference,

1. *Requests* the Economic and Social Council to reconsider the budget envisaged for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, on the basis of a report of the Secretary-General outlining resource requirements for regional and interregional preparatory activities, public information activities and for the Conference itself;

2. *Urges* Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals to contribute extrabudgetary resources to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General for the preparations of the Conference, especially for the participation of representatives of the least developed countries in regional meetings and in the Conference;

3. *Urges* Governments, international organizations and multilateral financial institutions to provide assistance to the least developed countries for their preparatory activities at the national level;

E

Documentation

1. *Decides* that the documentation for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, will include:

- Report of the Secretary-General on the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;
- Draft final document (Platform for Action);
- Update of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development;
- Update of the World's Women: Trends and Statistics;
- Updated compendium on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of regional preparatory meetings for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace;
- Relevant sections of final documents emanating from the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights and the International Conference on Population and Development.

Decision 35/101. Title of the world conference on women in 1995

At its 13th meeting, on 8 March 1991, the Commission on the Status of Women decided:

(a) That the world conference on women in 1995 should be entitled "Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace";

(b) That promotion of the world conference at the national level could also utilize additional formulations, such as the following sub-titles:

(i) Remove the Obstacles Now;
(ii) Women: Half the World - Half the Power;
(iii) Women: Mobilizing for Power - Acting for Change;
(iv) Social Justice for Women;

(c) That the results of the use of additional formulations at the national level should be made available to the Secretariat for inclusion in reports on the preparations for the world conference.

Non-governmental organizations

Activities leading up to the World Conference and the NGO Forum are being coordinated by a Planning Committee which meets each year at the time of the Commission. The Steering Committee currently comprises the Coordinator, the presidents of the NGO Committees on Women in New York, Geneva and Vienna, the President of the Conference of Non-governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (CONGO). A Convenor has yet to be appointed.

The third Planning Committee Consultation took place on 9 and 10 March 1992. Topics discussed included budget and finance; media and public relations; and regional conferences. The following action plan was suggested to ensure the mobilization of national affiliates of international non-governmental organizations.

Suggested action plan

1. Contact national affiliates immediately with request/suggestion

1.1. To begin establishment of national coalition open to a broad variety of concerned organizations

1.2. To develop national priorities and to increase efforts to integrate women in all aspects of development such as positive action to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Forward-looking Strategies

1.3. To ask national affiliates to report back to international headquarters - even on an interim basis - about action taken

1.4. To send reports to Steering Committee at address of the secretariat, where a task force will receive the answers and prepare a report to the 1993 Consultation and Commission on the Status of Women.

2. Purpose

These coalitions should start the networking process by establishing contacts with governments and national machinery for the advancement of women

2.1. In order to ensure NGO participation in national appraisal processes and
2.2. To contribute to national reports and proposals for national platforms of action

2.3. Once the structure has been established, national NGOs' concerns can be fed into the regional preparatory process.

3. Suggested timetable

March 1992: INGOs reach out to their national affiliates suggesting to establish national coalition.

March 1993: Reports received by Steering Committee will have been fed in to Secretary-General's report to the Commission on the Status of Women acting as preparatory body for the 1995 Conference.

During 1993: Regional NGO preparations will reflect national concerns and regional NGO Committees/Networks should be established.

March 1994: Final contributions to national report or write own NGO report and discuss with Governments.

During 1994: (a) Organization of regional forums in conjunction with the United Nations regional meetings;
(b) Reporting back to Steering Committee, so that it can report to the Commission on the Status of Women at the last preparatory meeting in March 1995.

Note: Information on international level preparations should be fed back to national affiliate during the whole process.

Address of Steering Committee:
c/o Marlene Parenzan
Coordinator
Kirchengasse 26/14
A-1070 Vienna, Austria
Tel./Fax: 43 1/52618 99

Notes

1 E. Vallance, "Do women make a difference? The impact of women MEPs on community equality policy", *Women, Equality and Europe*, M. Buckley and M. Anderson, eds. (London, Macmillan, 1988).

2 Anne Firor Scott, "On seeing and not seeing: A case of historical invisibility", *Journal of American History*, June 1984, p. 15.

3 Jill Vickers, "Getting things done: women's views of their involvement in political life", United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Ottawa, 1988.

4 Kathleen Jones, *The Politics of Gender*, Kathleen Jones and Anna G. Jonasdottir, eds. (Sage, 1988), p. 22.

5 M. Kent Jennings and Barbara G. Faragh, "Gender and politics: convergence of differentiation", paper presented at a conference on political action, Bellagio, Italy, 1980; and Commission of the European Communities, *European Men and Women in 1983* and *European Men and Women in 1984*, quoted in Patricia Gurin, "The political implications of women's statuses", *Spouse, Parent, Worker. On Gender and Multiple Roles*, F. J. Crosby, ed. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987).

6 Center for the American Woman and Politics, *News and Notes*, vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1989), p. 1.

7 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982) and Alice S. Rossi, "Beyond the gender gap: women's bid for political power", *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 64, No. 4 (December 1983), p. 713.

8 Lily Segerman Peck, "Comments on the procedures for appointments to public office", document submitted to the Cabinet Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at its inquiry into the procedures and criteria used in appointing to public office, 1989, para. 2.2.

9 C. Marshall, "From culturally defined to self defined; career stages of women administrators", *Journal of Educational Thought*, vol. 19, No. 2 (1985), pp. 134-137; B. M. Bass, *Stodghill's Handbook of Educational Leadership* (New York, The Free Press, 1985); and A. Statham, "The gender model revisited: differences in the management styles of men and women", *Sex Roles*, vol. 16, No. 7/8, pp. 409-429.

10 Sally Hegelson, *The Female Advantage; Women's Ways of Leadership* (New York, Doubleday, 1990), p. 255.

11 Timothy Bledsoe and Mary Herring, "Victims of circumstances: women in pursuit of political office", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 84, No. 1 (March 1990).

12 Maria Weber and others, *The Situation of Women in the Political Process in Europe, Part I: An Analysis of the Political Behaviour of Women in Europe* (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1984), p. 4.

13 H. M. Hacker, "Women as a minority group", *Social Force*, No. 30 (May 1951) pp. 60-69.

14 R. M. Kanter, *Men and Women in the Corporation* (New York Basic Books, 1977), p. 239 and Viola Klein, *The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

15 Ann Boman, "Every other slot to the ladies", final report of the project of the Secretary of Labour on women's representation, Stockholm, 1987.

16 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *The Political Role of Women*, by M. Duverger (Paris, 1955); Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (London, Heinemann, 1960); and Peter Pulzer, *Political Representation in Britain* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1967).

17 Linda M. Bennett, "The gender gap: when an opinion gap is not a voting bloc", *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 67, No. 3 (September 1986).

18 Susan Biernesderfer, "Political women give even the cowboys the blues", *State Legislatures*, October 1990, p. 22.

19 Pippa Norris, *Politics and Sexual Equality* (London, Wheatsheaf Books, 1987).

20 Pippa Norris, "Women in congress; a policy difference", *Politics*, vol. 6, No. 1 (1986).

21 Hege Skjeie and others, "Norway: a case history of political integration in Europe", paper presented at a UNESCO meeting of experts, Oslo, February 1990, p. 38.

22 Vallance, op. cit., p. 127.

23 M. H. Leijenaar, "De Geschade Hearlijkheid", *Politiek Gedrag van Vrouwen en Mannen in Nederland, 1918-1988* (The Hague, SDU, 1989).

24 Commission of the European Communities, *Men and Women in 1987* (1988).

25 Barbara Nelson, in Biernesderfer, op. cit.

26 Drude Dahlrup, "From a small to a large majority: women in Scandinavian politics", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 11, No. 4 (1988); and Ruth Mandel, "Women in politics: goals and gains", *CAWP News and Notes* (Summer 1990), p. 7.

27 Helga Maria Hernes, "The role of women in voluntary associations and organizations", *The Situation of Women in the Political Process in Europe* (Strasbourg, Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe, 1984), p. 34.

28 Ibid., p. 29.

29 Jenny Chapman, "Adult socialization and our group politicization: an empirical study of consciousness raising", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 17, 1987, pp. 315-340.

30 Eva Kolinsky, *Women and Politics in West Germany* (Berg, 1989), p. 269.

31 Kathy A. Stanwick, "Political women tell what it takes", paper of the Center for American Women in Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, New Jersey, 1983.

32 *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

ISSN 1010-9064